

Workforce Investment Act  
Technical Assistance Guide

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# **Work Experience**

## Work Experience **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GUIDE**

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# **I. PURPOSE OF THE WORK EXPERIENCE ACTIVITY**

Work Experience is a short-term or part-time planned, structured learning experience that takes place in a public or private for profit or non-profit workplace for a limited period of time, generally not exceeding 520 hours. Work Experience is for participants who need assistance in becoming accustomed to basic work requirements and self-management skills. It should promote the development of good work habits and basic work skills. Work Experience is available to youth, adult, and on rare occasions it may be appropriate for dislocated workers.

## **A. Secretary's Commission on Acquiring Necessary Skills (SCANS)**

SCANS are foundation skills and work place competencies, which are identified as being necessary for people to succeed in the world of work. These skills provide an excellent framework for employer assessment and feedback and for enriching the work site experience. SCANS can be incorporated throughout the Work Experience activity.

## **B. Duration**

Generally, participation in Work Experience should not exceed 520 hours, unless the case manager documents the rationale for extending the Work Experience in the participant's case notes. Specific hours must be determined as part of the development of the job description and Work Experience Learning Plan (WIA-40), and will be based on the participant's needs. The anticipated duration of Work Experience shall be recorded in the participant's Employment Plan.

**Note:** Participants in WIA Work Experience cannot incur overtime.

**Note:** When a WIA Work Experience is being utilized to serve a youth participant, child labor laws must be observed. The State of Idaho follows the Federal child labor regulations. Please refer to [www.youthrules.gov](http://www.youthrules.gov) for a complete guide of Federal child labor laws.

## **C. Payments**

All individuals participating in this activity will receive an hourly wage equivalent to the federal minimum wage. Participants are provided with FICA and Worker's Compensation coverage while enrolled and active in this activity. Payment to the participant can only be made for time actually spent in the activity or authorized state and national holidays. Authorized holidays are allowed if the employing agency provides holiday pay to similarly situated, temporary employees and the Service Provider has not expressly prohibited such payment. No vacation or sick leave is provided.

## **II. PARTICIPANT CONSIDERATIONS**

Participant appropriateness for entry into Work Experience is determined during the assessment process and documented in the participant file. This assessment should show a clear link between the anticipated Work Experience and potential improvement in the participant's employability.

The Work Experience activity is an ideal setting for participants to acquire SCANS and work maturity skills. In addition, Work Experience can be an excellent career planning mechanism for the participant by providing occupational sampling and exposure to the unique aspects of specific vocations, including non-traditional employment opportunities. Based on a participant's experience in an actual work environment, the individual should have a strong inclination as to whether the same or similar occupation is worthy of additional exploration.

## **III. WORKSITE SELECTION**

One of the case manager's roles in identifying potential Work Experience sites is to ensure that the employer is fully aware of the requirements of WIA. Although the Memorandum of Agreement (WIA-48) and accompanying Work Experience Operational Guidelines (WIA-48-A) provide detailed information, it is recommended that the case manager specifically review this information with the employer. Each of the items listed should be discussed, emphasizing the necessity for the employer to record the participant's work time on the weekly time sheet (WIA-50) and submit it to the WIA Payroll Unit. The employer should be made aware that Work Experience is a supervised activity and all employer staff members who may be responsible for participant supervision and guidance must be knowledgeable of the program's requirements.

The case manager must be especially careful to match the participant with the employer in selecting and screening potential Work Experience sites. Factors such as location, general employment conditions, type of work, the participant's demonstrated aptitude and interest in the work offered, and availability of supervisory staff committed to a successful experience for the participant are essential considerations for the case manager.

### **A. SCANS**

Participants will be better prepared to enter the labor market if they possess SCANS. They include basic academic skills, the ability to communicate, to adapt to new situations, and to solve problems. While these and other related skills are not technical skills, they have everything to do with long-term success in the job.

## **B. Developing Learning-Rich Work**

If supervisors are to be successful coaches for participant learning, they should assign meaningful work, not make-work. Meaningful work will require the kind of planning and problem-solving that leads people to stretch and enhance their abilities. It will provide a benefit to the agency or community where the work is performed, and it will be a source of pride and motivation for the participant.

An ideal training site will incorporate the philosophies of learning-rich work which are:

- Participant skills can be directed and developed to perform complex tasks under appropriate supervision.
- The work assigned to participants must have real value providing a benefit to the employing organization or its participants.
- If properly designed, the work will give more back to the organization than it costs in supervisory time and other resources.
- Time must be taken to identify the skills being developed, document them, and consider their applications in other areas of the participant's life.

Case managers should be prepared to assist work site supervisors in the development of learning rich work environments and will provide technical support for the worksite. The Supervisor's Workbook (WIA-184) provides additional information relative to SCANS and the development of a learning rich work environment.

## **C. Learning Plans**

The WIA Case Manager has an option of using the Work Experience Job Description (WIA-40) or the Workplan and Competency Resume (WCR) (WIA-185) when assisting the work site supervisor in the development of a Work Experience learning strategy. A mechanism which evaluates the participant's progress in achieving these skills is also required. The Workplan Competency Resume (WCR) incorporates SCANS and was designed to evaluate a participant's progress in achieving these skills. If the WCR is not used, the Participant Evaluation (WIA-175) should be used. Any deficiencies should be addressed with the participant.

The Work Experience Memorandum of Agreement, the Work Experience Job Description, WCR, and related forms are contained in the forms section of the WIA MIS.

## **IV. WORK EXPERIENCE SUPPORTIVE SERVICES**

The case manager may provide supportive services to enable a participant who cannot afford to pay for such services to participate in the program. The case manager must ensure the participant is unable to obtain supportive services through other programs that provide such services and that it is necessary to enable them to participate in WIA activities. The need for supportive services must be documented by the case manager in the participant case file. In administering supportive services, the case manager will follow procedures and requirements described in the Supportive Services-Insurance TAG.

## **V. WORK EXPERIENCE FORMS**

The following is a list of forms to be completed for each Work Experience participant.

- Work Experience Memorandum of Agreement (WIA-48)
- Job Description (WIA-40)
- Workplan and Competency Resume (WIA-185)
- Participant Evaluation (WIA-175) when the WCR is not used
- W-4 Tax Withholding Form
- INS Form I-9
- WIA Weekly Time Report (WIA-50)
  
- ✓ Work Experience Operational Guidelines (WIA-48-A)
- ✓ Supervisor's Workbook (WIA-184)

Note: The Work Experience Operational Guidelines is an information publication designed for worksite staff and does not require completion; a copy should be provided to the worksite. The Supervisor's Workbook provides SCANS information for work site supervisors and should be provided to supervisors of Work Experience participants.